

National Aeronautics and
Space Administration

Headquarters

Washington, DC 20546-0001

April 12, 2006



Reply to Attn of:

Office of Legislative Affairs
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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Subject: FY 2007 Budget Hearing before the Subcommittee on Science,
Departments of State, Justice, and Commerce, and Related Agencies,
Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives, regarding
NASA FY 2007 Budget Request

Date March 30, 2006

Members

Present:

Republicans:

Frank R. Wolf, Chairman (VA)
Steven Kirk (IL)
Dave Weldon (FL)
John Culberson (TX)
Rodney Alexander (LA)
Tom DeLay (TX)

Democrats:

Alan B. Mollahan, Ranking Member (WVA)
Jose E. Serrano (NY)
Robert E. "Bud" Cramer (AL)

Witness: **Dr. Michael Griffin**, NASA Administrator

Summary:

The Subcommittee Chair, Ranking Member and Members expressed support for the Vision for Space Exploration and other key priorities. They praised the Administrator's leadership of NASA. They expressed support for the priorities identified in the President's FY 2007 request, but indicated that they believe additional funds are needed to fund science and aeronautics priorities, and to ensure that the gap in U.S. human space flight capability between the time the Space Shuttle is retired and operational capability of the Crew Exploration Vehicle (CEV) is minimized. China, and its space ambitions, was a major topic at the hearing. Chairman Wolf agreed with a request from Rep. Kirk (R-IL) that NASA regularly report comprehensively to the Committee on the space activities of China, India, Russia, and other space faring nations, using open source and unclassified information. Chairman Wolf (R-VA) indicated that he would include direction that NASA provide these reports as part of the FY 2007 Subcommittee bill.

The Subcommittee is considering a joint hearing with the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, or a Member briefing, from NASA and others on China's space capabilities.

Summary of Major Discussions/Questions:

- Chairman Wolf opened the hearing by expressing his support for the Vision for Space Exploration and the NASA Administrator; however, he stated that he is deeply concerned about aeronautics budget reductions and the loss of jobs to China. Dr. Griffin summarized the FY 2007 Budget request, highlighting the growth in science programs and accomplishments, explaining the new aeronautics research focus, and stressing the impact earmark growth has on NASA's objectives.
- Congressman Mollahan expressed concern that this budget does not strike the appropriate balance between science and exploration. In his opening statement, he observed that part of the rationale of moving NASA (and NSF) under the reorganized Science, State, Justice, Commerce Appropriations Subcommittee was to ensure that science would be preeminent, but that NASA was facing new competition with other agencies in the bill. He expressed concern that we are "eating seed corn" as a result of reductions in Science in the FY 2007 request compared with assumptions for FY 2007 in the FY 2006 request. He concluded that "the bottom line is that you need more money to do all that you and the Congress want to do" and that he would like to see some changes in the NASA request.
- Chairman Wolf expressed concern that "we are in decline in science in this country." He asked whether the request reflected a balanced set of programs or whether science and aeronautics are lower priority. Dr. Griffin replied that it is the best that we can achieve given the other National priorities. He stated that human space flight did not receive a "free pass" in this budget. Space Shuttle flights were reduced by one-third, and the Space Shuttle replacement vehicle development was slowed. Dr. Griffin shares the Chairman's concerns and said that the last place reductions were taken was in the growth of science programs. He expanded that there are 55 operational science missions that provide a robust career field for today's young people. He stressed again that this budget is a reduction in the rate of growth for science.
- Chairman Wolf noted that NASA was not included in the American Competitiveness Initiative (ACI) even though NASA's Aeronautics program is engaged in longer-term, cutting edge research and, in fact, the Aeronautics request is reduced from the FY 2006 appropriated level. The Administrator noted that, until last year, NASA's Aeronautics Program had suffered from a lack of clear focus, engaged in demonstration and point designs that were not related to strategic interests. With NASA's refocused Aeronautics Program, we will engage in fundamental research which will produce results for the entire community. NASA takes its stewardship seriously and we are returning to fundamental roots.
- Congressman Mollahan expressed concern over the 4-year gap between the Space Shuttle and CEV. He asked if there were enough funding for CEV, would that eliminate the gap? Dr. Griffin replied that the CEV funding profile is "waiting in line" for the Space Shuttle and International Space Station work to be completed, and for the same total dollars, CEV could be completed in 2011 or 2012, if the funding were available and the phasing were correct. Mr. Mollohan requested that NASA provide, for the record, the funding augmentation that would be needed in FY 2008-2010 to achieve CEV availability by 2011-2012.
- Congressman Kirk expressed concern that Americans and Congress are "unaware of our space competitors," that the Chinese space program is "massive," and that NASA should report regularly to the Committee on the space programs of other countries using open source data. The Congressman stated that NASA should provide these regular

- reports to reinforce the perception of NASA's budget request and ensure an "embrace of your mission."
- Chairman Wolf agreed and stated that he was also very concerned regarding China's space ambitions. He suggested that NASA provide a report within 30 days, and indicated that he was willing to send a "Dear Colleague" letter regarding the importance of achieving CEV capability as soon as possible after Space Shuttle retirement in order to retain U.S. space leadership.
 - Congressman Serrano asked if the science cuts were going to be revisited, expressing specific concern about the reductions to the Astrobiology program. The Administrator answered that a review will be held in May 2006, and if changes are recommended, NASA will document those in the initial FY 2007 Operating Plan. The Congressman also requested information on NASA Explorer Schools (NES). Community School 215 is in his district, and he wanted to know the status of NES funding.
 - Congressman Weldon noted that NASA has had to make "tough choices, but I think you are doing the right things." He expressed concern over safely flying the Shuttle with the proposed out year budget reductions and also about the 4-year gap between Space Shuttle and CEV. He expressed concern that China has stated that they will land a person on the moon by 2017--one year earlier than the U.S. plans. He asked to verify that there would be no U.S. human capability during the gap. Dr. Griffin verified.
 - Congressman Cramer expressed concern that China may land a person on the moon one year before the U.S. plans (2017 vs. 2018), and is especially concerned that the China Space Agency is run by their military. He asked if our schedules are budget driven, and whether we are on the "fast track." Dr. Griffin affirmed that our schedules are budget driven, technically, the U.S. can get back to the moon faster, but "we are doing in series what was done in parallel during Apollo." Cong. Cramer expressed concern about Center revitalization, noting the aging Marshall Space Flight Center infrastructure, and asked about the Agency's plans. The Administrator noted that many NASA Centers are 40 years old; he also noted that infrastructure upgrades have been proposed as part of the Exploration Systems planning, but that NASA does not have funding. In response to a question, the Administrator indicated that NASA does not now have an Agency-wide plan for infrastructure repair. Cong. Cramer requested that NASA provide for the record an update on the status of RLEP II.
 - Congressman Alexander expressed concern about the future of Michoud. Dr. Griffin replied that Michoud remains the one place where NASA can fabricate large tanks for new systems. NASA has no plans to build tanks elsewhere.
 - Congressman DeLay said that he regretted seeing "the debate become human space flight vs. science," and indicated that Congress, working with the Administration, could provide additional funding for science, adding that "this is a critical time." He expressed numerous concerns regarding China. He observed that the U.S. once had a 40-year lead in space, and since we have not been flying humans in space, China is doubling their efforts. Mr. DeLay ultimately requested a Subcommittee hearing regarding China before markup of FY 2007 bill.
 - Congressman Culberson also had numerous concerns regarding China, but also expressed concern about NASA's not the funding highest priority of NAS Decadal Survey in 2003 (Europa), and requested that NASA provide for the record estimates of funding required to meet the top priorities specified in the Decadal Surveys.
 - Congressman Serrano asked about HST plans. Dr. Griffin replied that the budget request supports a launch NLT early 2008.
 - Chairman Wolf expressed concern about the reduced FY 2007 request for Aeronautics compared with the FY 2006 appropriation, asking whether this request was a "game, in


anticipation of Congressional augmentation, or whether it is an 'underserving' program." The Administrator responded that the program was not reduced compared with the planned runout, and that we are refocusing on fundamentals. In response to questions from the Chairman, the Administrator committed that NASA would provide information for the record concerning distribution of Aeronautics funding as well as data regarding status of wind tunnels. The Chairman asked about the DAWN reversal and the decision process. Dr. Griffin replied that the original cancellation decision was not made for budgetary reasons. The pending request has enough funds for DAWN. The cancellation was reversed because new technical information was presented and the independent review confirmed. He explained the new governance model, but also said that NASA has some more work to do to in implementing the model.

- Congressman DeLay asked if NASA could meet projected flight rate and meet IP commitments with this budget. Dr. Griffin affirmed and stated the value in the U.S. keeping its word to the international partners.
- Congressman DeLay asked about Commercial Cargo Services and expressed support for the program because it encourages private research. Dr. Griffin agreed and stated that NASA is investing \$500M to encourage the development of private companies' capability.
- Chairman Wolf concluded that he thought the U.S. is in a "Sputnik Moment" regarding the potential loss if U.S. leadership, and asked for NASA assistance in identifying names of experts for a potential hearing regarding China's space plans.

Requests for Information/Material for the Record

1. Within 30 days and then every six months, NASA to provide a report on competitor nations space programs, using open source data.
2. Provide funding status of NASA Explorer Schools.
3. Provide written status on MSFC's role in the RLEP II competition.
4. Provide response to how much funding required for the top priorities of Decadal Surveys, including Europa.
5. Provide response to whether there is a Puerto Rican astronaut.
6. Provide information on how many wind tunnels are currently operating and how many is NASA planning to close this year.
7. Request potential NASA support for a near-term educational event (JASON).

Copies of NASA testimony can be found at the NASA Office of Legislative Affairs website at <http://legislative.nasa.gov/>.



Kristen Erickson
Director, Appropriations and Budget Division (Acting)
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